FPCC LITERATURE DISTRIBUTION, JUNE 16, 1963

According to the Warren Report, Oswald "first distributed his handbills and other material uneventfully in the vicinity of the U.S.S. Wasp, which was berthed at the Dumaine Street wharf in New Orleans, on June 16, 1963" (WR 407). I know of the following evidence concerning this incident: (1) On June 21, 1963, a copy of one of Oswald's handbills was turned over to the Security Division of the Manned Spacecraft Center at Houston by Martin S. Abelow; (2) Around August 1, 1963, Oswald wrote V.T. Lee of the FPCC that "we also managed to picket the fleet when it came in and I was surprised at the number of officers who were interested in our literature" (20H525); (3) In July 1964, an FBI check turned up some handbills and a report of the incident in the files of the N.O. Harbor Police. This memo summarizes this evidence.

In January 1964, the Commission routinely asked various agencies for relevant information. On February 4, NASA sent the Commission the handbill which had been given to the Houston Security Office by Mr. Abelow, an employee of Lockheed, "with the comment that it had been received in New Orleans." The Security Officer apparently thought the handbill relevant because it bears the name A.J. Hidell. He did not indicate what action, if any, had been taken when the circular was first received in June.

This NASA correspondence seems to have been filed and forgotten, since later material concerning Abelow does not refer to it. On May 19, 1964, a confidential source told the FBI that Abelow had been showing some FPCC literature around at work after he had been to New Orleans. Abelow had allegedly once said that he should probably furnish these items to the FBI (CD 1033).

On May 28, Abelow was interviewed by the FBI (CD 1034, CD 1204). He recalled that he had seen a young man distributing FPCC leaflets while he was visiting an aircraft carrier in N.O., but he "has no idea" who this man was.

The FBI interview report on Abelow is quite inadequate. There is no indication what sort of work he did at Lockheed. (A few months ago, I learned that he was in electronics or electrical engineering at Lockheed in Sunnyvale, Calif.) There is no reference to the source's claim that Abelow took some leaflets and later showed them to friends. One would not guess from the FBI report that Abelow had turned in a leaflet (I have no idea why he did so) or that it had Hidell's name stamped on it. Quite possibly Abelow had simply forgotten many details.

The Commission noted the Abelow interview and Oswald's letter to V.T. Lee, and asked the FBI to investigate the possibility that Oswald (maybe with others) may have distributed FPCC literature in the circumstances described (letter, Rankin to Hoover, July 9, 1964; the FBI investigation is presented in CE 1412). The FBI apparently would not have checked this out on their own. As suggested, they checked with the ONI, who had no record of such an incident but told the FBI when the Wasp had been in New Orleans. The FBI found that the Harbor Police files contained a brief report of an unnamed person handing out leaflets on June 16, 1963, and copies of some of those leaflets. Patrolman Girod Ray recalled the incident, and tentatively identified the man as Oswald. Ray felt that he had written the man's name down, but could not recall it. (The handbill in the Harbor Police files, unlike Abelow's copy, has no stamped name and address.)

The FBI developed two latent fingerprints on the two leaflets from the Harbor Police files; they were not Oswald's (CD 1518, p. 55). The FBI report does not indicate if a comparison was made with the prints of Harbor Police personnel.

The handbill published in CE 1412 (22H807) is obviously a doctored version of CE 2966A, another handbill, with the address blanked out. This was apparently done by the Government Printing Office. (See my memo of November 29, 1967.) I can see no reason for this crude touch-up job, and expect that it is not of great importance.

Paul L. Hoch
December 26, 1968